



Photo — courtesy Utah Publicity Dept.

Full-size replica of extinct *Diplodocus* dinosaur at Utah Field House of Natural History, Vernal

there are cities which glitter with gold.' A Spanish Catholic missionary was sent with Indian guides to find the seven cities supposed to contain such wealth. He saw only one of them from a hilltop, became frightened, and returned to Mexico City with an exaggerated story regarding the abundance of gold in the 'Seven Cities of Cibola.' "

"What did the people in Mexico City think about his report?" a student named Stephen Kirk asked.

"Naturally they believed him," Mr. Madsen replied; and then he continued, "There was great excitement as they listened to the missionary's story. Mendoza, the viceroy (governor) of Mexico, immediately (1539) appointed Francisco Vazquez de Coronado to lead an exploring expedition into the unknown country to the north in search of the cities of Cibola. Coronado paid for equipping a small army from his personal wealth. It cost him \$200,000. He believed that

when he conquered the cities of Cibola and obtained the gold, he would be wealthier and greater than Cortez. Thoughts of the empires he would conquer and make his own filled his mind with dazzling dreams.

"History claims that Coronado's army was composed of about 300 of the sons of Spanish nobility. They carried lances and swords, wore coats of shining armour, and rode on the best horses that the Spaniards could furnish. Negro and Indian servants went along to drive cattle which were to be killed as food for the soldiers. The Spaniards marched and marched through mountains, valleys, and deserts for hundreds and hundreds of miles."

"But sir, did Coronado and his men find the cities filled with gold?" a student named Elizabeth Fox curiously asked.

"Yes, Elizabeth, they found the seven cities of Cibola far up in what is

now New Mexico, but to their disappointment the cities were no more than Indian pueblos (villages) inhabited by the Zunis. One could easily guess that Coronado was greatly disappointed when he learned that the Indian villages had no gold nor precious stones of any kind. He had spent his \$200,000 and in return had gained no wealth. He and his soldiers had marched for months, had experienced hunger, had fought and bled — and all for gold that did not exist,” the teacher explained.

#### **Cardenas' discovery of Grand Canyon**

“Mr. Madsen, did Coronado and his soldiers become discouraged and return to Mexico City?” John Brown asked.

“No, not yet,” was the reply. “The Zuni Indians — probably with the hope of getting rid of the Spaniards — said to them, ‘The fabulous wealth you are seeking lies farther to the northwest.’ Pointing in that direction they continued, ‘A great mystic river over yonder has cut an immense chasm into the earth that no man has ever been able to cross.’

“Eagerly listening to the red men’s tale and being anxious to obtain the gold, Coronado sent one of his captains, a man named Garcia Lopez de Cardenas, with twelve men to explore to the north and west.

“Cardenas’ party marched for 20 days, passing through the Painted Desert of Arizona, and came upon the wonder of wonders — the Grand Canyon. These explorers stood upon the high plateau-like banks and looked far down into the depths of the mighty canyon. More than a mile below them they saw the muddy waters of the Rio Colorado rushing along.

“‘Look!’ one of the Spaniards exclaimed, ‘The river appears to be no more than six feet across, although the Indians told us that it is half a league wide.’

“For three days Cardenas and his men searched along the rim of the canyon for a passage leading down to the water. One morning three men crept down over the ledges in their attempt to descend to the stream. At the close of the day they returned, and in their report to Cardenas, said, ‘We found it impossible to descend to the stream. Distances and objects are larger than they seem to those looking down from above. Rocks that appear to be no taller than a man are larger than the cathedral in Seville, Spain.’”

#### **Cardenas' arrival at border of Utah**

Mr. Madsen explained, “In their search for a descent into the great gorge, Cardenas’ exploring party passed along the south bank of the Colorado River. Their exact route is not known; however, most historians believe that they traveled northward across the present line of Arizona into Utah. If that is true, Spaniards were the first Europeans to enter our state.”

He continued, “After completing their explorations, Cardenas and his men returned to Cibola. Later they were joined by Coronado’s party which had been exploring farther northeastward into the present United States. The entire group of Spaniards returned to Mexico City with a very discouraging report. The result of this report was that 236 years passed before another Spanish expedition entered Utah. This exploring party was led by Father Escalante in 1776. Before telling the story of Escalante’s visit to our state, I should describe the Spanish claims and activities in western United States at that time.”

#### **Spanish claims and activities**

“Following the discovery of the New World, Spain laid claim to the western half of North America and to most of